

I had an injury that caused me to blackout; do I have to wait six months to apply for a license?

Blackouts caused by external influences like a blow to the head are generally not included in the rule, unless the injury caused a seizure or other neurological condition. A medical report may be requested to verify the cause of the blackout.

If my driving privileges are suspended following an episode, how do I reinstate my license?

The first step is to wait until you have remained free of any episode for six months. A medical report must be completed by your physician or health professional* verifying the date of the last episode and indicating you are fit to safely operate a motor vehicle. The report will be reviewed and if approved for driving, you may apply for your driver's license to be reinstated. You will be required to pass knowledge and driving exams, as well as a vision screening.

Will my driving privileges be restricted?

The most common restriction is a requirement to submit a medical report in the future. The health professional and the driver's license examiner may recommend additional restrictions. The term of the license will be two years following any loss of consciousness.

How do I report an episode of loss of consciousness or loss of voluntary control?

If you have an episode or you feel you are unable to drive due to a health problem, you should surrender your driver's license at a driver's license issuance site. The driver's license examiner will process the necessary sanction and issue an Iowa nonoperator's identification card at no cost to you.

What should I do if I am concerned about someone else's ability to safely drive due to a health or vision condition?

A concerned person can submit a signed, written request for an evaluation of a driver with a physical, mental, or visual impairment regardless of age. The Iowa DOT's Office of Driver Services reviews all requests and determines the appropriate course of action, including any medical or vision evaluations and required testing. You can find a request form at <https://forms.iowadot.gov> (Iowa DOT Form number 431030).

For more information:

Driver & Identification Services
Iowa Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 9204
Des Moines, IA 50306-9204
call: 515-244-8725 or email: ods@iowadot.us



YOUR HEALTH AND DRIVING SAFELY

Information for Iowa drivers



Iowans rely on driving to meet our needs, and the needs of our families, to sustain employment, perform volunteer work, shop for necessities, and take part in social activities. Driving means freedom and independence. Because driving is so important to us, we need to make sure we are fit to drive safely. While many factors can affect our driving ability, health conditions can have an immediate impact on driving.

This brochure contains information to assist you in understanding Iowa laws and procedures that apply to health conditions and driver fitness.

What types of health conditions can affect my driving ability?

Many health conditions, illnesses, or diseases can affect driver fitness, common problems include the following.

- Seizure
- Blackout/Loss of consciousness
- Diabetes
- Neuromuscular disorder (Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy)
- Sleep disorder
- Heart problem
- Stroke
- Dementia or cognitive impairment
- Mental illness
- Substance abuse

What should I do if I have a condition or disease that could affect my fitness to drive?

Discuss your driving ability with your physician or health professional*, ask what to watch for in the future and when it may be unsafe to drive. If you are experiencing driving problems, your physician or health professional may recommend a driving evaluation with an occupational therapist or certified driver rehabilitation specialist, or perhaps a driving test with a driver's license examiner.

My license is expiring soon, will I need my doctor's approval to renew my license?

Any health condition that could affect driver fitness may result in a request for a completed medical report and/or a driving exam. Be honest with the driver's license examiner so the best determination can be made – your safety depends on it.

Are there specific requirements after a seizure or blackout?

Iowa rules require a six-month, episode-free period verified by a satisfactory medical report before licensing. The six-month rule applies to any type of paroxysmal (sudden, without warning) or episodic loss, lapse, or disturbance of consciousness; or loss of voluntary physical control. This includes, but is not limited to, convulsive seizures, blackout spells, passing out, fainting, or syncope (loss of consciousness resulting from insufficient blood flow to the brain).

How does this rule apply to persons with diabetes, heart conditions, or obstructive sleep apnea?

Any type of loss of consciousness or loss of voluntary control is treated the same under the rules, regardless of the underlying cause. For example, persons who experience insulin shock, coma, or severe hypoglycemia that cause loss of voluntary control; those who blackout due to a heart-related condition; and those who fall asleep suddenly due to a sleep disorder are subject to the six-month, episode-free period before licensing consideration.

Are there any exceptions to the rules?

Iowa law allows for an exception when a medical report indicates the episode:

- Was a single, nonrecurring episode with an identified cause and treatment is not required for the condition.
- Has been identified as syncope.
- Occurs only when the person is asleep.
- Occurred when medications were withdrawn by a physician, but the person is episode free when placed back on medications.

Prior to granting an exception, certain conditions require review and licensing recommendation from the Iowa Medical Advisory Board.

*Physicians licensed to practice medicine or surgery, osteopathic medicine or surgery, licensed advance practice nurses, and licensed physician's assistants may sign the medical report required by the Iowa Department of Transportation.